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For Immediate Release
September 23, 2004

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New legislation will combat invasive plant species

LANSING – Michigan would be better protected against invasive plant species like Eurasian milfoil and hydrilla under legislation introduced Thursday in the Michigan Senate, Sen. Jud Gilbert, R-Algonac, announced today.

“Our state is blessed with an abundance of water resources, and we need to protect them from further invasion by these destructive organisms,” said Gilbert, one of the sponsors in the bi-partisan package.

Senate Bills 1420-1427 would regulate the sale and possession of certain non-native plants that pose a threat to habitats in Michigan. The legislation is similar to prohibitions put in place earlier this year to protect Michigan’s waterways from invasion by non-native fish species.

The package also would establish a Non-native Species Advisory Council to establish criteria for identifying infested waterways and make recommendations regarding the state’s efforts to eradicate invasive species. The council also would report annually to the Legislature with recommendations for additions to the lists of invasive species and infested waterways.

“The additional oversight established in these bills will help us identify the high-risk waters and use what resources we have to combat these foreign species more wisely,” Gilbert said.

The Great Lakes Conservation Task Force Report, issued in 2002, made broad recommendations for important steps that the state should take to protect our water quality. One of the most important recommendations was to implement laws that will guard against further invasion of both non native fish and plants.

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